



Youth Policy

Adopted by the 18th session of the General Assembly held on 23-25 November 2011 in Geneva. To be reviewed by the 21st session of the General Assembly in 2017.

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to inform, guide and enhance the participation of young people in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation).

Strategy 2020 challenges the International Federation to “do more, do better, and reach further” in saving lives and changing minds. It asks for a special focus on young people not only for today but also for the future, recognising their particular role in building and sustaining communities that are based on respect and solidarity.

Strategy 2020 recognises that building-up and sustaining strong National Societies requires that they attract and retain more young people. It urges that young people be educated, enabled and empowered to be active in leading and participating in voluntary activities and in the governance, management, and services of National Societies.

Defining youth

The terms “youth” and “young people” in the International Federation cover people in the age range of 5 to 30 years. This includes children (5 to 11 years old), adolescents (12 to 17 years old), and young adults (18 to 30 years old). National Societies are guided reasonably by this range in adopting their own definitions according to local laws, social norms and cultural contexts.

Valuing the role of young people

National Societies recognise and value the important role and contribution of young people in addressing humanitarian and development challenges. Their multiple roles include being innovators, early adopters of communication, social media, and other technologies, inter-cultural ambassadors, peer-to-peer facilitators, community mobilisers, agents of behaviour change, and advocates for vulnerable people. National Societies recognise the leadership role of young people in tackling contemporary and emerging issues.

Young people bring much needed skills and capacities when working alongside older people in a spirit of mutual respect. This is acknowledged as being crucial to the inter-generational transfer of experience that is vital to both progress and stability in society.

Strengthening the contribution of young people

National Societies educate young people in the humanitarian values and Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and encourage them to acquire the practical skills needed to live, work, and relate to others accordingly.

Adolescents and young adults in National Societies are provided with the opportunity to be engaged as active members and volunteers and, in the context of prevailing national employment laws, as remunerated staff.

Young people are involved in all the activities of their National Society, taking into account relevant age-specific requirements of needed skills and experience, safety and well-being. They are encouraged to be fully involved in the planning, design, delivery, and review of Red Cross Red Crescent services to which they contribute or from which they benefit. National Societies provide their young volunteers and in particular the youth leaders with the opportunity to participate in decision making processes not only at the national but also at the international level.

Young people are fully included in the governance and management of their National Societies at headquarters and branch levels. They may be organised through integrated or specific youth structures according to the institutional context that best optimises their contribution in the National Society.



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

National Societies treat young volunteers according to the International Federation's Volunteering Policy, while recognising that young people may have different and additional needs to those of older volunteers. In particular National Societies take additional care to safeguard young people engaged with them.

National Societies provide their young volunteers, members, and staff with opportunities to advance their personal and professional development through learning and training, and preparing them for current and future leadership roles.

National, regional, and international networks established by young people themselves, are strongly promoted as an invaluable contribution to sharing knowledge and innovation across the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. National Societies actively encourage and support youth representatives to participate in these networks aimed at promoting youth leadership and exchange of concrete ideas, innovations and activities.

Young people are encouraged to continue in an active role with their National Societies as older adults, facilitated by effective working practices that support their transition between the youth and adult structures of the National Society.

Young people as beneficiaries

Young people all over the world face unprecedented challenges in today's globalised society. These include violence, exploitation, discrimination, substance abuse, accidents and diseases, unemployment, poverty consequent to financial and economic crises, trafficking, migration, and urbanisation. Additional risks may come from negative peer pressure on personal and social behaviours, and the unsafe use of new communication and social networking technologies.

In tackling these vulnerabilities, and in supporting young people to manage and mitigate the risks they face, the aim is to enable them to grow as well adjusted, responsible, and caring members of the communities they inhabit. Thus, their safety and protection, and their age and gender-specific development needs are given specific attention in the design and delivery of Red Cross Red Crescent services.

Impact of the policy

The impact of the successful implementation of this policy is expected to be a growth in the numbers of young people involved with National Societies, and a growth in those staying on with them as older adults. National Societies' activities and measures involving youth, and the number of youth in their governance and leadership positions are also expected to grow. Youth will be engaged in high quality and high impact activities that contribute to the building of stronger National Societies.

The impact will be measured by National Societies reporting through the Federation-wide Reporting System against a baseline to be established by 2012. National Societies are encouraged to develop additional specific measures for tracking the youth involvement in its activities and services.